

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS

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YOUR HEALTH IN HACKNEY

AT LEAST ONCE IN OUR LIVES, the National Health Service and how well it works, becomes more important than any of our other worries. When it does, many people assume it will take care of everything.

BUT the NHS is in a mess. The whole Service has recently been re-organised. But it does not seem to have improved anything a year after the change came into operation.

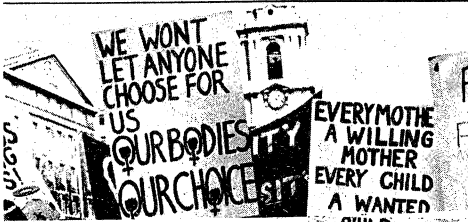
AND it's in a mess in Hackney as well. There is chronic understaffing right across the board: nurses, health visitors, chiropodists, public health inspectors and family doctors who live in the Borough, as well as those essential to keeping the whole thing going, like cooks.

SOME facilities are underused because of inadequate publicity - like family planning clinics. Some facilities are overused because there are not enough - like the ante-natal clinic at the Mothers Hospital. Some facilities are misused because they are badly housed - nearly all hospitals in the Borough date from before the First World War! Some facilities don't exist - like any emergency service in the Homerton area.

WHO CARES? More importantly, WHO KNOWS?

INSIDE, the first part of a guide to health facilities in Hackney, where they are and how you can use them.

INSIDE.....



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MATERNITY WARD
HACKNEY & QUEEN MARY'S HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MOTHERS' HOSPITAL
(SALVATION ARMY)
7A LOWER CLAPTON ROAD
LONDON, E.5
phone: 985-6666
SPECIAL CLINIC
There is no Casualty Department at this hospital
Nearest Casualty Department in this Group is at:-
QUEEN MARY'S HOSPITAL
WEST HAM
STRA

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Anyone interested in working on the paper - we need people for writing and researching articles, layout and selling - should ring 249 5614 or ask at Centerprise. What goes in the paper depends on the people who work on it. If you disagree with some of it, write a letter to the above address.

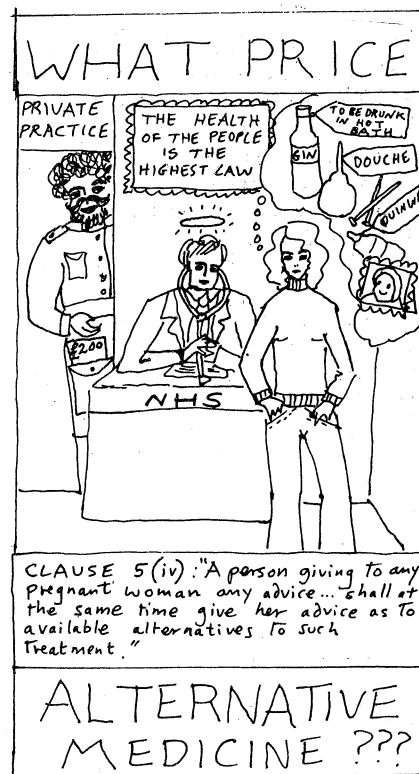
²ABORTION: the back streets again?

Under the Abortion Act of 1967 there are two main grounds on which you can get an abortion. The first is if "the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman, or of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated." Along with this condition doctors are told that "account may be taken of the pregnant woman's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment." This means that your financial problems, housing conditions, career etc. can be taken into account. The second condition for getting an abortion is if the child is likely to be deformed or abnormal (so, for instance, you may get an abortion if you have had German measles during your pregnancy, as this is likely to affect the foetus).

Although the 1967 Act does give wide grounds for abortion, in that you are entitled to ask for an abortion on 'social' grounds, many women who legally qualify for an abortion are still unable to get one on the National Health. The decision rests finally with the individual doctor, and even if your G.P. agrees you should have one, you may well be refused by the consultant at the hospital. The 1967 Act has never been fully implemented, but it is a definite improvement on the situation before. Since 1967 the number of women who have died as a result of illegal abortions has dropped dramatically.

Now, a Private Members Bill - the James White Abortion (Amendment) Bill - is going through Parliament.

Under cover of 'stamping out the abuses' of the 1967 Act, it is in fact trying to restrict the grounds for abortion to such an extent that, if it is passed, it will be almost impossible to get one anywhere. Women will be forced to resort to the back streets again; it will increase more than ever the exploitation of women. In Italy, a country where abortion remains illegal because of the power of the Catholic Church, 3,000 women die each year as a result of illegal abortions.



The Abortion (Amendment) Bill denies the right of women to have abortions on social grounds. If passed, it will mean that the doctor must prove there is grave risk to the woman's life or serious injury to her physical or mental health if she continues with the pregnancy. The comparative clause

in the 1967 Act ('greater than if the pregnancy were terminated') has been left out. 'Grave risk' and 'serious injury' will be difficult to prove, and in the Amendment Bill the onus of proof lies with the doctor. That is, if prosecuted for carrying out an abortion, they will be considered guilty until they prove themselves innocent. However sympathetic doctors may be towards a woman's need, they will be understandably cautious in case they are prosecuted.

There are other dangerous aspects of this Bill. It will become an offence to publish the name of a woman who has had an abortion or who is involved in proceedings about one - so private prosecutions can be brought against a doctor and the prosecutor can remain anonymous.

It will become an offence to give advice about abortions, and even to give advice about getting advice about abortions, unless you are a doctor or specially registered. So community workers, Citizens Advice Bureaux etc. will not even be able to tell a woman to go to her G.P.

The date up to which an abortion can be performed will be lowered to 20 weeks. At the same time a foreign woman will have to prove she has been in this country for at least 20 weeks. So women who have repressive laws in their own countries will be made to suffer. It will become an offence to give advice to a girl under 16 unless her parents are present.

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The Abortion (Amendment) Bill has gone through Parliament with extraordinary speed. It is already at the Select Committee stage. At first it was given no publicity, and it got through the first reading without anyone knowing about it. Before the second reading a copy of the book 'Babies for Burning' was sent to each M.P. James White has admitted that a lot of the evidence he used in drawing up his Amendment Bill was taken from this book. It is a sensationalist book, full of horror stories about live foetuses being murdered and their bodies being sold to cosmetics factories. About a month ago it was exposed in the Sunday Times as being totally false; since then the two authors have vanished. Yet the book is still being used as evidence by the Select Committee.

The Amendment Bill is being supported by the Church and organisations like S.P.U.C. (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) and Life. They are well organised and there is a lot of money from somewhat suspect sources such as the National Front being pumped into their campaign.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO FIGHT THE ABORTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

WHAT YOU CAN DO :

Write to your MP and urge him or her to vote against the Amendment Bill.

Get your union branch to pass a motion opposing the Bill and pledging support for the National Abortion Campaign.

Join the Hackney Abortion Campaign at 42, Kynaston Road, N16. Demonstrate on June 21st with the National Abortion Campaign.



BODY POLITICS

66% of women who have had abortions under the present Act would not have qualified for a legal abortion under the Amendment Bill. The government does not have a policy on the Bill; MPs are allowed to vote "according to their conscience". They are refusing to see abortion as a class issue. Rich women have always been able to get abortions, and they always will be able to. If the Amendment Bill is

passed, it is working-class women who will be affected the very women, in fact, who are often most in need of abortions. More than this, the clause of 'guilty until proved innocent' creates a dangerous precedent that could be used in later anti-working-class legislation. The Abortion (Amendment) Bill is reactionary and regressive. We must fight it.

KEEP IT LEGAL, KEEP IT SAFE

FIGHT THE JAMES WHITE
ABORTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Abortion in Hackney

It is very difficult to get an abortion in Hackney. The Metropolitan performs three a month, and the consultants do their best to persuade women that they do not need, and even do not want, an abortion. Hackney Hospital does more, but the attitude is much the same as at the Metropolitan. Women are made to feel irresponsible and immoral in becoming pregnant. Often they are told to go away for a few weeks and 'think it over', by which time it is too late. The assumption is that a woman is not capable of making up her own mind, and the doctor knows better. If you are on Social Security, have six children already, have been deserted by your husband or boyfriend, this is taken as proof of your irresponsibility. Having a child is the punishment.

Many GPs in Hackney do not even send their patients to the hospitals, knowing that they will be refused. They have to send them to private organisations outside Hackney. Hackney is a working class area, wages are lower (especially for women) and housing conditions worse than in many other districts. If the Abortion (Amendment) Bill is passed these consultants will feel completely secure in their dictatorships, and will probably refuse to perform abortions at all.

THE SITUATION IS BAD -- DON'T LET IT WORSEN!

FIGHT THE JAMES WHITE ABORTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

4 Hackney Helps Hoteliers

With the summer trade only just beginning to pick up, local hotel-owners should feel grateful to one of their most regular customers - Hackney Borough Council.

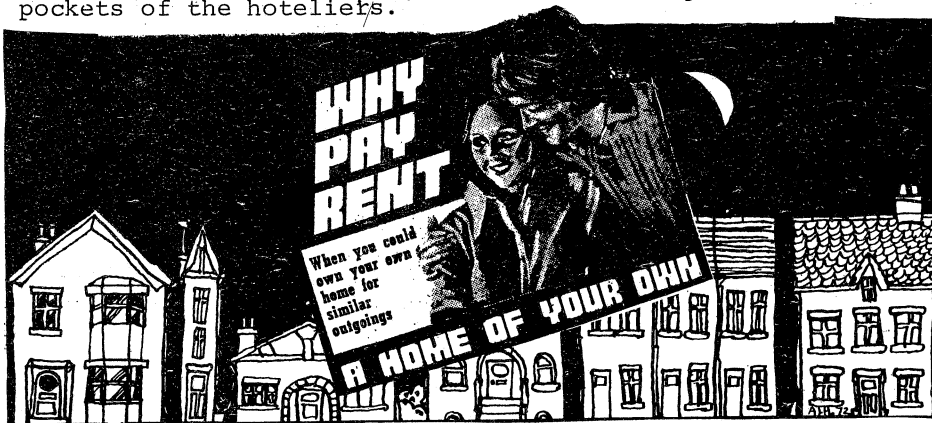
Living in a hotel may sound like a cushy number. But we're not talking about the Hilton. This is a bed-and-breakfast place in the Seven Sisters Road or round the back of Kings Cross station. For homeless families sent there by Hackney Council, this is expected to be their home for months on end.

No luxury meals or private bathrooms, either. Just a cramped room for a mother and children, a measly breakfast, meals in the Wimpy Bar and nappies drying on the radiator. And the average cost to the Council for such 'luxury'? £60 a week, straight into the pockets of the hoteliers.

This lower figure was duly substituted in the newspaper's chart comparing four London boroughs, thus putting Hackney in a better light. Unfortunately, since the other statistics were kept the same, this made a nonsense of the chart.

But why, in the first place, is Hackney pouring money down the drain in this way - enough to build dozens of new houses? The Council says it has no short-life accommodation which could be used instead, for instance houses waiting to be pulled down in a few years' time. This seems unlikely, since the Council is still pushing ahead with large redevelopment schemes.

One other reason could be that Hackney has hardly bothered at all to take advantage of official government encouragement to buy



Hackney Council now tops the list of London boroughs which use bed-and-breakfast hotels as 'a last resort'. The total monthly cost of keeping 155 families in hotels is £38,000. On an annual basis, that adds up to a staggering £450,000. The extravagance of this amount has even worried the District Auditor, who is supposed to keep an eye on how much the Council spends.

One interesting thing is the way the Hackney Gazette reported these figures. The Council claimed that the January figure of £38,000 was unusual, and the average spending over the last 10 months was 'only' £27,500.

up houses on the open market, many of which are empty and could be used for homeless families. At a recent Council meeting, the chairman of the Housing Committee announced proudly that the number of houses acquired during 1974 would probably reach 189, as compared with only 37 during 1973. Doesn't sound bad does it? But then you have to look at what other councils are doing. Camden Council has bought up several thousand homes in the past couple of years. Against that record, Hackney's feeble effort leaves a lot to be desired.

learn to read

Adults who can't read or write can take advantage of a new opportunity to learn when the Hackney Reading Centre opens shortly. This has been set up as a joint venture by Centerprise and the City and East London College.

Can you imagine not being able to tell where a bus is going, or how much things cost in the supermarket? Or to have to get friends to fill in forms at the Post Office? The Hackney Reading Centre, which has a large room in the Centerprise building, is to be well equipped with many modern facilities, and staffed with full and part time tutors. Courses will probably start in the autumn. If you

know of anyone who might find the Centre useful, then contact:

HACKNEY READING CENTRE,
136 Kingsland High St.,
E8. (254-9634).

Centerprise

After Hackney Council's refusal to increase its tiny £1,000 grant, Centerprise is having to look elsewhere for finance to support its various projects.

The Greater London Arts Association recently promised £4,000 towards the 1974/5 budget, and other charities are considering making grants. Even so, a large deficit on running costs has built up, and the future looks none too cheerful.

One way in which local residents can find out about Centerprise and possibly support it is by coming along to the regular Cooperative meetings. The Coop discusses most of the things that go on, and is supposed to be the community's voice in how the project is run. Coop members also do sessions in the bookshop and coffee bar.

The next meeting is on May 12th, 7.30pm, when there will be a discussion about the Publishing Project. Anyone who lives or works in Hackney is welcome.

HACKNEY HEALTH GUIDE

5

The article below gives the basic facts about the health facilities in Hackney. It concentrates on the recent re-organisation of the NHS, local hospitals and health centres, and the family doctors, dentists, chemists and opticians. A further article in the next edition of THE HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS will outline the facilities and the special problems of mothers, children, the old, the disabled and the mentally ill. It is the last three, of course, who are suffering most from recent cutbacks and the local confusion in hospital care planning.

the health system

ON APRIL 1ST 1974, THE NHS WAS 'transformed' by an Act of Parliament passed the previous year. Although many changes occurred since the time it was created in 1948, this new Act was heralded as The Big Opportunity to put the whole thing back on its feet. It was to restructure the whole administration and bring the consumer - that's you and me - into a closer, more critical and more powerful position than ever before.

The new structure is arranged in tiers. At the top, reporting to the DHSS, is the Regional Health Authority covering a population of several million. Ours is North East Thames and stretches from Camden to Essex. They set policy. Under them is the Area Health Authority - ours is the Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and City of London AHA. It is the most important level since they have complete control over health care facilities, employ most of the staff and are largely responsible for future planning.

Within our AHA there are three Districts the bottom tier of the cake. The City and Hackney Health District is run by the District Management Team (DMT) on a day to day basis and reports to the AHA on the districts present demands and future needs.

The majority of key positions throughout this structure are held by medically-trained people

There are supposed to be a number of ways in which consumers - people at the grass-roots is a favourite phrase - can have a say in the running of the NHS. By far the most important is the Community Health Council. The CHC is at Shoreditch Health Centre on Kingsland Road. It meets every month on the 3rd Tuesday at 6.30pm and they always make plenty of room for anybody not on the Council to come. The average so far has been about 8!

The idea is that it should act as a 'watchdog' over the quality of health service facilities and how they are run. They discuss and pass on criticisms and suggestions to the AHA. Its members have the right to visit local hospitals, etc., and look at plans made by the AHA. Most of its members (15), however, are local Councillors and people nominated by the AHA (6). The rest (9) are selected from local voluntary organisations and in our CHC these are from the more traditional and established ones. The time given by these people is not as great, as yet, as one would expect.

Pat Gordon, the permanent Secretary to the CHC, says that 'it can fight for better standards'. It is not the place to raise individual complaints, although they will help if you call (739-8351), but it is the place to take more general problems, like quality of service and treatment of a particular group of people.

The other way in which a local community can supposedly influence the running of the NHS is through the DMT and the new planning system. The idea is that the Community Physician, Dr Laura Fry, sets up Health Care Planning Teams on a particular area and they are able to invite local groups and people to have their

A final article will give the basic facts on Welfare Rights (grants, benefits and allowances) and Patients Rights, and what you can do for yourself about your own health.

All of these articles are drawn from a booklet called YOUR HEALTH - A GUIDE FOR THE PEOPLE OF HACKNEY to be published by CENTERPRISE sometime in June or July. If you have any information that you think might be useful to include in such a guide, please send it to John Rowley at Centerprise, 136, Kingsland High Street, E8.

say. In fact, only two have been set up so far - one on Child Health and one on the elderly. A third is planned on the mentally ill. Their work has not been publicised and its difficult to find out what they are doing.

The only other new body to know about is the Family Practitioner Committee. This administers all the family doctors, dentists, chemists and opticians in the Area. They are meant to handle complaints as well against any one of these people but clearly

they will be biased in favour of the professionals and deal with most complaints on the gentleman to gentleman basis. They will investigate however and are the proper place to go. The FPC also issues all medical cards when you want one, and all the forms needed to get reductions on prescription charges.

ADDRESSES

City and Hackney Community Health Council, Shoreditch Health Centre, 210, Kingsland Rd., E8. Telephone: 739-8351. Ms Pat Gordon. Monthly meetings, complaints and suggestions about the NHS.

City and Hackney Health District. 205, Morning Lane, E9. 986-3266. Day to day administration and office of the Community Physician

Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and City of London Area Health Authority, Addison House, Chart St, N1. 253-3020. General administration and future planning.

Family Practitioner Committee for the District. Same address and telephone as the AHA. Administers family doctors (GPs), dentists, chemists and opticians.

6 hospitals

The reorganisation of the NHS a year ago has produced no noticeable change in the provision or quality of hospital care. If anything, the organisation which manages them is even more remote.

There are two kinds of hospital - general and specialist. General hospitals deal with most things, from heart disease to childbirth, specialist hospitals concentrate on one area, such as old people or psychiatry.

The hierarchy in hospitals is much the same, however, stretching from doctors down to the porter. Among doctors, the top man or woman (usually a man) is the consultant. Beneath him come senior registrar, registrar and houseman, in that order. Nursing staff follow a similar gradation, from matron through sisters, staff nurses down to students.

Such regimentation in hospitals makes them confusing and intimidating places for the outsider. When you do find yourself in one, it is therefore essential to find out exactly what is happening to you. However busy the doctors and nurses appear, stop them and get them to answer your questions. For example - what's wrong with you? what are they going to do? what are the possible side-effects? how long will you be there? when are the visiting hours?

In some hospitals, visiting hours are seen as a nuisance which get in the way of the regular routine. In others, the system is more flexible. In-patients can fill in a form so that their relatives/friends are told when to come. Children can usually be visited by their parents at any time.

Hackney contains 12 hospitals of one kind or another. Most of these are housed in old buildings, some former workhouses dating from the last century. A declining and ageing population has also meant that there are now too many beds of the wrong type in the wrong places.

As the problems in Hackney hospitals become more acute, there

have been numerous plans to improve the situation. For some time, the idea of a new District General Hospital linked to a network of health centres was put forward. Hackney's present DGH is St.Bartholomew's in West Smithfield. But for most people it is too far away and too academically orientated.

So a new DGH was planned on the site of the Eastern Hospital. Under this plan, the Eastern would not continue to care for the large numbers of old people and 'mentally ill' it has at present. These would be transferred to the German Hospital and St.Matthews. The Metropolitan in Kingsland Road would be closed. In fact, the Eastern site is totally unsuitable.

It is remote, and served by a terrible public transport system. Last November, this plan was scrapped anyway, under government cut-backs, and Hackney will probably now have to wait another 20 years for a new DGH.

But the proposals have still had their effect. With the new DGH in mind, Hackney Hospital has been allowed to run down. This fact, and the increasing crisis of short-staffing, has meant that there is no provision at all for acute and emergency cases in the Homerton area. 250 people recently signed a petition complaining about the 120-bed psychiatric wing at Hackney. There is also a lack of recreation space and underqualified nursing staff.

The situation is little better in the German Hospital. Staff have complained about the run-down there too. The casualty department was closed in 1972, surgical wards have been shut and the medical wards run down. In particular, there is bitterness that a plastic surgery unit has been closed whilst other areas are demanding an identical service.

Meanwhile, government thinking has shifted away from large District General Hospitals towards smaller 'community' hospitals. The Regional Health Authority covering Hackney seems to have no firm new plans. One practical suggestion is that the Eastern site should be sold and the money used to improve facilities throughout the rest of the borough, including the Hackney. And until something dramatic like that is done, local hospital services will continue to leave a lot to be desired.

Hospital	Address/Phone Number	Beds	Speciality	Open Clinics
Moorfields Eye	City Road, EC1 (253 3411)		Eyes	Eye Casualty
St. Bartholomews	West Smithfield, EC1 (606 3483)	909	General, Maternity	VD Casualty
St. Marks	City Road, EC1 (253 8821)		Large bowel	
Mothers	Lower Clapton Road, E5 (985 6661)	110	Maternity	Casualty
German	Ritson Road, E8 (254 5202)	174	Geriatrics, Psychiatry	
Metropolitan	Kingsland Road, E8 (254 6862)	146	General	
St. Joseph's	Mare Street, E8 (985 0861)		Terminal	
Eastern	Homerton Grove, E9 (985 8911 or 985 1193)	435	Infectious diseases, geriatric, Neurological, mentally handicapped	VD
Hackney	Homerton Row, E9 (985 5555)	817	General, Psychiatry, Maternity	Casualty
St. Leonards	Nuttall Street, N1 (739 8484)	197		Casualty
St. Matthews	Shepherdess Walk, N1 (253 4218)	185	Geriatric	
Bearstead Memorial	Lordship Road, N16 (800 8282)	38	Jewish Maternity	



Hackney Hospital: no private patients, but a run-down service.

health centres

Officially there are 6 health centres in Hackney, but a further 6 are included in the list below because they have more facilities than a large group practice of doctors.

Health centres are an extension of the family doctor service and a link with the local hospitals. They contain a number of GP's under one roof plus a range of other facilities. These include the following:

Maternity Clinic
Child Health (including vaccination and immunisation)
Family Planning
Sexual problems advice
Ears and eyes
Dentistry
Chiropody (feet)
Smokers Advisory Clinic
Nursery Group
Physiotherapy

Not all the health centres listed here have all these things, so check first.

BARTON HOUSE,
233, Albion Rd, N16 (249 5511)

JOHN SCOTT,
Woodberry Down, Green Lanes, N4 (800 0111)

SOMERFORD GROVE,
Somerford Grove, N16 (249 2071)

ELSDALE STREET,
28, Elsdale St, E9 (985 5368)

RICHMOND ROAD,
136, Richmond Road, E8 (254 6374)

LOWER CLAPTON,
6, Lower Clapton Rd, E5 (985 2316)

SORSBY,
3, Mandeville St, E5 (986 5613)

SHOREDITCH,
210, Kingsland Road, E2 (739 8351)

FOUNTAYNE,
Fountayne Rd, N16 (806 1006)

WICK,
200, Wick Rd, E9 (986 6341)

GOODWILL,
New North Road, N1

KINGSMEAD,
5, Templemead House, Kingsmead Estate, E9 (985 3987)

7 doctors

General Practitioners (GP's) are the doctors most people go to when they are ill. They are supposed to serve a particular locality and a limited number of patients. A good local doctor is someone who can combine medical skill with an understanding of the many other problems his patients might have.

Even under the new NHS, local doctors are still very much outside the system, a powerful force in themselves. Their national body is the British Medical Association, which lobbies on things like salaries. With the setting up of Family Practitioners Committees there is supposed to be a steady integration of their services into the rest of the NHS. But the status and power of bodies like the BMA still keeps the emphasis on hospital and curative medicine rather than the community and preventive medicine which is badly needed.

GP's work either from individual surgeries or in group practices or health centres. They keep lists of people who register with them and get paid partly on the size of the list and partly on the kinds of work they do. The structure of those payments means that it is not really worth their while to take on people over 65 or those who are chronically ill. Their most profitable work is for insurance companies and the police. GP's can refuse to take people on their register. Lists of doctors (as well as dentists, chemists and opticians) are available at post offices, and an up-to-date list will be published in the Health Guide mentioned above.

Surgeries are usually held twice daily - early morning and late afternoon. In an emergency, you can phone your doctor outside these hours. When you do visit him, don't be afraid to ask questions. If he uses words you don't understand, ask for them to be explained. If he gives you drugs to take, find out what they are, what they do, what the possible side-effects are, and what you should do if they occur.

Complaints about your doctor can be taken up with the Family Practitioners Committee (see address above). You can also

go to the local Citizens Advice Bureau or advice centre for help in taking up complaints.

If you don't like your doctor, and want to change to another, you should:

1. Take your medical card to your present GP and ask him to sign it.

2. Send your medical card or a note with your name, address, date of birth and NHS number to the Area Health Authority (see address above) and ask them to suggest a GP.

dentists

When dentists first came into the national health system in 1946, dental treatment was free. Since then, charges have consistently gone up, most recently in April, 1974, and going to the dentist is now much more expensive than going to the doctor.

Unlike GP's, dentists operate on a piece-work basis. They are paid according to what treatment they do for NHS patients, and retain the freedom to take on private patients. The tendency has been for dentists to increase this private work at the expense of NHS patients. In fact, dentists operate what amounts to a commercial enterprise, with their profit being what is left over after collecting fees and paying expenses. And like any business, when costs are inflated the increase gets passed on to the consumer.

**BE TRUE TO YOUR TEETH ★
OR THEY'LL BE FALSE TO YOU**

All this makes it even more important to know how to look after your teeth yourself. Clean them twice a day, brushing up and down over the gums for at least 4 minutes. This gets rid of the coating of bacteria which leads to decay. Eat less sugar, flour or glucose-type foods. Ask your dentist about using Dental Floss, a type of wire which slots in between the teeth to clean them more thoroughly.

If you do have treatment, you should check that you are

being charged the right amount. These are the current charges for the commoner things.

Check Up	Free
X-Ray	25-30p
Filling	47p-£1.30
Scaling	55p
Crowning	£7-£10
Extraction	50p-£1.10
Plastic Plate	£4-£5.20
Plastic	
Dentures	£8.75

Remember that you can never be charged more than £10 for a course of treatment and that certain people are excluded from payment. These are:

1. Children and young people under 16 or at school full-time.

2. Expectant and nursing mothers (1 year either side of birth).

3. Anybody receiving Supplementary Benefit or Family Income Supplement.

*Those aged between 16 and 21 get everything free except dentures, for which they must pay half the cost. Others, especially those on low income, may be eligible for help. Ask for forms F11, F1D or F1 at a Social Security Office.

In an emergency, a dentist will usually treat you as a priority, although he may try and charge you private rates. If he cannot treat you, he may refer you to either the London Hospital Dental Department, Turner Street, off Whitechapel High Street, E1 (247 5454) or the Royal Dental Hospital, 32, Leicester Square, WC2 (930 8831).

opticians

To get your eyes tested for the first time you should go to your GP, who will write a letter of recommendation to an optician. There are three types of optician - ophthalmic medical practitioners (qualified doctors who can test sight and prescribe glasses), ophthalmic opticians (who do the same but are not qualified doctors), and dispensing opticians (who simply supply glasses to a prescription).

Once you have a letter from your doctor, the optician will test your sight free of charge. If you need glasses, you will have to pay for both lenses and frames. Lenses are charged at

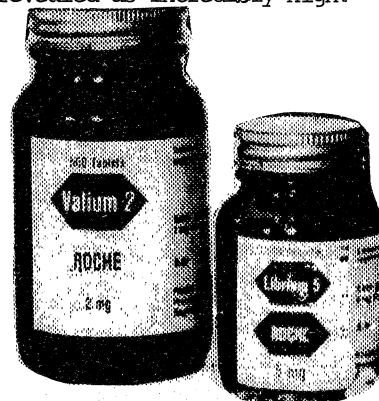
cost price. NHS frames vary between 80p and £1-93, but are limited in style. Since there is a higher profit on commercially manufactured frames, there is considerable incentive for the optician to sell these. It is also worth noting that ophthalmic opticians prescribe glasses to 83% of those who have their eyes tested.

Hackney contains one of the best eye hospitals in the country - Moorfields in City Road (see list), where specialist treatment is available.

drugs

The thalidomide episode in 1963 provoked the setting up of the Committee on Drug Safety. In its first year it received 4,000 reports of adverse reactions to drugs then in use. At the same time, many drugs have been shown to be ineffective at what they claim to do.

About 10% of total NHS spending goes on drugs. 40 large companies supply 90% of those drugs. Their profits have often been revealed as incredibly high.



Because it is a competitive business with large rewards, doctors and chemists are constantly bombarded with publicity material about new drugs. The drug industry spends more money on advertising than research. Unfortunately, this is often the only way in which doctors will hear about the drugs, and is unlikely to contain information on testing and side-effects.

For the individual, the best thing is to always ask

1. The approved name of a drug as well as its brand name.
2. The purpose of taking it.
3. The known side-effects.
4. How to recognise a bad reaction and what to do about it.

Out of hospital, onto the streets



The Mental Patients' Union is a democratic organisation of mental patients and ex-mental patients that was formed in March 1973. They first lived in London in a squat in Camden Town, but moved to Hackney after they were evicted by Camden Council. In Hackney they were offered a short-life property, Robin Farquarson House in Mayola Road, by the Peter Bedford Housing Association. Since then the house has been run as a democratic community; it is the centre for the local group of the M.P.U., and the information centre for the Federation of Mental Patients' Unions, which was founded in Manchester in April 1974. Mayola Road is due to be demolished soon to make way for a school extension. Newlon Housing Association (backed by Hackney Council, although financed by the GLC rather than by Hackney) is now looking for a house for them. The next property might also be short-life. The M.P.U. feel that the backwardness of Hackney Council in providing secure accommodation for ex-mental patients is part of a general trend that must be fought.

After hospital- the 'insane' label

The 1959 Mental Health Act made local councils responsible for providing housing for homeless ex-mental patients. Indeed Hackney Council are now proposing to build a hostel for twenty people, scheduled for completion at the end of 1976, and another one for sixteen people, which would not be ready "before 1978 at the earliest". The members of M.P.U. have experience

of hostels, and are understandably wary of the Council's proposals. They fear that hostels can too easily become extensions of the hospital. In fact, there are already various 'hostels' throughout the country for ex-mental patients, in which the patients are segregated from the rest of the community and regimented as much as they were in hospital. Their labour is often contracted by outside firms for minimal rates of pay (therapy?) and where drugs are all too close at hand. Of course the patients are 'free' to leave, but the freedom is an abstract one, while they have nowhere else to go.

Hospitals, too, are meant to have an obligation towards their ex-patients. Hackney Hospital is better than many, in that at least it does not usually discharge patients without giving them an address to try (although sometimes the address is a doss house or emergency accommodation for one night only). Some social workers do their best, but having a social worker find accommodation for you is a mixed blessing; ex-mental patients would prefer not to have the stigma 'insane' attached to them when they come out of hospital. The 1959 Mental Health Act gives landlords security against 'unstable' tenants, and they can evict at will. They only have to complain of strange behaviour to the police or the Mental Welfare Officer, and the tenant is back where he came from. Who believes the word of an ex-mental patient against that of a 'sane' landlord?

A further threat to the rights of mental patients and ex-mental patients comes from the government's plans for Regional Security Units. These are 'hospitals', 'asylums', or whatever, that are to be set up throughout the country in order to deal with the 'difficult' cases that are now being treated in the psychiatric units of general hospitals. They will be, in effect, like mini-Broadmoors, high on security, as their name suggests, and hard to get out of.

Discrimination

The M.P.U. is fighting to end discrimination against all those who do not 'fit in'. They do not like the Council's plans for hostels for old people, "mentally handicapped" children, "mentally ill" adults, etc.: such classification leads to further segregation and discrimination. Instead they want to see the Council's bias in favour of two-parent families change; they want to see the Council, and the government, take responsibility for housing all sections of the community. Which does not mean just providing hostels for specific groups, but providing hostels for all those who wish to live in them, and providing houses for those who wish to live in houses. At the moment it is not just ex-mental patients who suffer, but all those who are not covered by the Council's housing policy.

M.P.U. can be found at 37 Mayola Road, E.5. Meetings every Saturday at 2pm. All mental and ex-mental patients welcome.

10 information

GROUPS

HACKNEY GINGERBREAD

Group for one parent families -- this means single fathers too! Meets every Tuesday at 7.30pm at the Salvation Army Hall, 122 Lower Clapton Road, E5. Enquiries to Gloria, 254-8405.
May 7th - JUMBLE SALE. All welcome. Starts at 6pm.

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

Meets every Wednesday, 8pm, at St Martin de Tours House, off New North Road, N.1

FRIENDSHIP ANONYMOUS SERVICE

Friendship House, 27 Hackney Grove E.8. Provides a 24 hour telephone service with people always ready to listen and act.
986-2233 (24 hours)
986-0973 (office hours)

STOKE NEWINGTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

54 Harcombe Road, N.16
People concerned about poor transport, badly planned redevelopment, piles of rubbish, dumped cars, empty houses and nowhere for kids to play. Contact them if you live there and feel the same.

HACKNEY PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION

34 Dalston Lane E8. 254-1620.
Advice service on Tuesdays 10-12: with free advice on pensions, supplementary benefits, welfare rights, housing.
Tea Bar: Monday-Friday. 10.30-4pm.

HARAMBEE II PROJECT

Upper Clapton Congregational Hall, E5. Social and advice centre, aimed particularly at young black people.

Open Tuesdays 10am-10pm
Thursdays 10am-4.30pm
Fridays 10am-10pm.

OFF CENTRE

Advice centre for young people between 13 and 25 on any problems. 25 Hackney Grove E8. Open Monday-Friday from 10am to 6pm (Tuesdays till 8.30pm.). Tel.: 985-8566.

MENTAL PATIENTS UNION

Robin Farquarson House, 37 Mayola Road, E5. 986-5251.
Meets every Saturday 2pm. All mental and ex-mental patients welcome.

AFTER SIX

Telephone 836-6534 during the day and 254-9844 after 6pm and at weekend. Emergencies only after 9pm and at weekends. After Six is a 24 hour information and advisory service for the single homeless and childless couples. Aimed at those who do not come within the range of local authority help.

MEETINGS

HACKNEY YOUNG SOCIALISTS

Hackney South and Shoreditch. 34 Dalston Lane -- meetings every other Wednesday. Contact A.Hall 85 Goldsmiths Row, E2, 985 1290 for details.

Hackney Central

34 Dalston Lane -- meetings every Tuesday, 8pm. Contact Kathy Gello, 6 Abersham Road, E8 for details.

Hackney North

Labour Party Rooms, 5 Stamford Hill N.16. Meetings every other Monday, 8pm. Contact: Mark Douglas 10 Osbaldeston Road N.16. Everybody welcome at all meetings.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Meets second Thursday each month at Centerprise.

LEA BRIDGE BRANCH CP

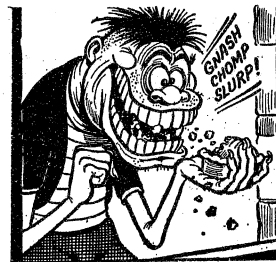
Open meeting on the Health Service. Dr Adrian White. Tuesday 6 May. All welcome -- ring 986 3075 for details of place.

PLAYS

HOXTON HALL

128a Hoxton Street, N.1 739-5431.
Friday 2 May 7.30pm. Exploding Trouser Co. An evening of zany humour.
Sat 3 May 6.30 & 8.30pm. "Paper Mask". Musical documentary about Charles Dickens.
Friday 9 - Sunday 11 May 7.30pm. "Macbeth". Performed by a professional company.
Friday 23 May 7.30pm. Music Hall.
Friday 30 May 8pm. Jazz Concert.
Sunday 25 May & Saturday 31 May 7.30pm. "Merchant of Venice". Professional company.

FOOD



DOWN TO EARTH

Durham Row, Stepney Green, E.1 790-3510.

Wholefood shop selling grains, flour, beans, oil, honey, herbs etc. Open Mon-Sat 9am-6pm.

MAY DAY

Rally at 11am on the Town Hall steps, organised by the Trades Council. "Why we should stay out of the Common Market." Speakers include Stanley Clinton Davies MP, Johnny Kotz, Labour Councillor and Dermot McNeill for the Trades Council. Liz Knight will speak on International Women's Year.

After the rally, there will be a MARCH through Hackney and Shoreditch to Finsbury Square. Then LUNCH, followed by joining up with the Central London demonstration on the Embankment.

May Day evening 7pm-midnight. Trades Council Social in the British Oak pub: corner of Oldhill Street and Lampard Grove, N.16. All welcome.

Celebrate May Day!

PLAYGROUNDS

HACKNEY MARSH

986-7245

SHOREDITCH PARK

739-0036

Please send any information for this page in future issues to HPP c/o Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High Street, E8.

WOMEN

Women and Health:

meetings every Friday at Centerprise 8pm. Self help study group.

Hackney Women's Aid.

All women welcome -- meetings every Thursday at 5.30. Tel: 254-7504 for details.

Hackney Trades Council

Women's Sub Committee

Interested in Equal Pay and Opportunities? Good working conditions? A Comprehensive Nursery system? Maternity leave and pay? Contraception and abortion? Meetings 2nd Tuesday every month at Centerprise. All welcome.

UNDER FIVES



John Scott Health Centre, Woodberry Down: Wednesdays 1.45-3.30pm.

There are also four in E.8.

At Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High Street on Tuesday afternoons for Mums with babies who would like to learn English. Ask for Sue Lucas.

Richmond Road Health Centre on Tuesday afternoons: ring Madge Harte, 249-5158.

Beechwood Road Social Services Office on Monday afternoons; ring Madge again, 249-5158.

Hackney Downs School on Monday afternoons; ring Bob Rendle 985-8886.

And five in E.5....

Pedro Club, Rushmore Road on Monday afternoons: ring Rose Leverson 806-6481.

145 Roding Road ring Maggie Rust for times, 986-3394.

21 Blurton Road on Thursday afternoons: ring Bridget Nash, 985-2605.

Downstown Club, Downs Road on Thursday afternoons: ring Maggie Barnett, 986-7106.

Community Hall, Nightingale Estate. Monday-Friday pm.

There's one group in E.9

The Victoria Park Group, 9 Church Crescent on Tuesday afternoons: ring Mary Julian, 986-0288.

and two in N.1.

Hoxton Hall: ring Frances Goldhill 986-3266.

and Orsman Mission; ring Frances for details.

Look out for the PIED PIPER - the newspaper of the Under Fives Committee. On Sale in May for 5p and full of up-to-date information PLUS a large map of where everything is for the under fives in Hackney. Lots of articles and photos. Available from Centerprise or by ringing 254-4208.

CENTERPRISE

136 Kingsland High Street
254-9632/3/4/5

The coffee bar is open on Monday (1-6.30pm), Tuesday-Friday (10am-10pm) and Saturday (10am-6.30pm). The bookshop opens at the same times, but closes Tuesday-Thursday at 6.30 and at 8.00 on Friday.

Other facilities and projects include

The Centerprise Publishing Project: If you are interested in getting a book or pamphlet published contact Ken Worpole.

Learning Exchange: A free exchange centre for education information which puts people who want to learn in contact with those who have offered to teach.

Silkscreen Workshop: Facilities for silkscreening posters etc. Run by Jim at 81 Lenthal Road, E.8. Phone Jim through Centerprise, or speak to Harriet.

Photocopying and duplicating facilities are available.

Advice Centre -- Thursdays 6.30 - 8.00pm.



Investigators Guide

The first comprehensive guide for tenants, workers and action groups on how to investigate companies, organisations and individuals has been published by Community Action magazine. It costs 30p from PO Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ.

MUMS AND TODDLERS GROUPS

are still growing fast in Hackney. Did you know that there are now six in N.16?

One is in Green Lanes at the Methodist Church Hall: ring Alice, 249-4356 for details.

One starts soon at St Michael and All Angels Church Hall Fountayne Road, N.16: ring Helen Kendall, 806-5817.

One is at 54 Harcombe Road, N.16 Go and see Liz Webber at this address.

One is at Barton House Health Centre; ring 249-5511 for times. If any mothers in this area would like to get a group going then go along on any Thursday afternoon and talk to the Health Visitors.

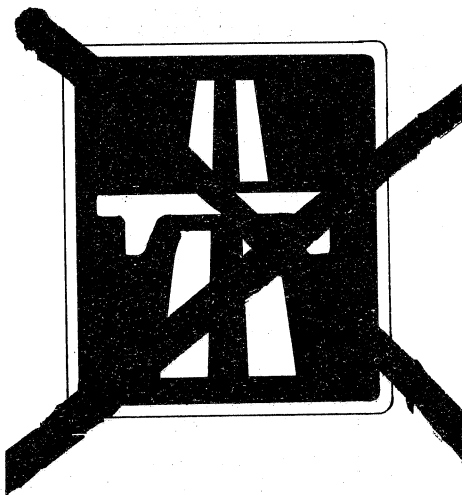
Somerford Grove Health Centre Mondays 1.30-3.30pm.

STOP THE ROAD

No decision has yet been made on the proposed new road from Hackney Wick to Dalston, which is part of the North East London Project (NELP) report on the traffic problems of this area. The Highways and Planning Committee of the Council met on April 1st to consider a report from its officers. The committee discussed this report and the results of two public opinion surveys for about five minutes, and then delayed a decision until they had the results of more studies being carried out by the GLC.

Only Councillor Owen spoke against the road and no councillor spoke in favour of the plan. It was clear that they are sitting on the fence about the road, and they do not want to make an unpopular decision in the light of strong opposition from Hackney people.

The Council has organised two surveys to find out what people feel about the road plan, which gave completely opposite results. The first survey was through the questionnaire cards available at libraries and the Town Hall in February. The cards listed six points of the plan and people were asked to vote for or against all six. 624 cards



were returned and of these 490 were against the road (78.5%).

Although these cards were not representative of all people in the borough it gives a less biased view than the second survey, which was carried out by a market research company. In this survey 1,061 people from all over the borough were interviewed and 71% were in favour of the road plan.

These results are useless, however, because the Council made a deliberate attempt to influence unfairly the opinion of the people interviewed through a letter from the Town Clerk, Mr. Huddy. This

letter was sent to all those to be interviewed before the survey, and was biased in favour of the road. Mr. Huddy said that the new road was needed for traffic crossing the borough (mainly heavy lorries and commuters); but did not say that the road will increase traffic nor that it will cause devastation through lost jobs and houses and cause noise and pollution. In both surveys the road was always mentioned last of the six points, which made it seem less important!

There has been a lot of opposition to the road from groups of people in Hackney, among others the Wyke Tenants Association and the South Stoke Newington Community Association. Both have passed resolutions against the road. The Stop the Road Campaign has held a march along the proposed route, held a public meeting and is organising a petition. The campaign has also produced leaflets and posters and will send a speaker to any residents or tenants' meeting about the road.

It is clear the Council cannot make up its mind about this traffic plan. By writing to or seeing your local councillor you can still influence their decision.

STOP THE ROAD CAMPAIGN:
Secretary - Roger Tyrrell, 98, Richmond Road, E8. Publicity - Malcolm Kaill, 3, Bushberry Road, E9. (986 8105).

Marsh Festival

The Hackney Marsh-on-Sea Festival, to be held on Daubeney Fields on July 12th/13th will be preceded by a Grand Bathing Belle Dance at Hackney Town Hall on June 6th. Music will be provided by Blooblo, the rock and soul band. There will also be a disco.

Celebrities and comedians will assist in judging the Bathing Belle competition which should provide a light-hearted climax to the evening's entertainment. Tickets are 75 p each and will be on sale later this month.

The Festival itself will be supported by floats and sideshows from many local organisations.

There will also be pier-head shows, cabaret, Punch and Judy, a grand donkey derby, brass bands and a barbecue to create the seaside atmosphere. A licensed bar will be open on both days. The Festival will end with a FreeForm fire show, which combines theatrical elements with spectacular fireworks.

To make the Festival a real success we need more people. Can you help build floats, drive lorries, man

stalls, take part in competitions or help with the dozens of other jobs that must be done between now and July.

If you would like to help, give Mike Gray a ring on 986 0963.

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